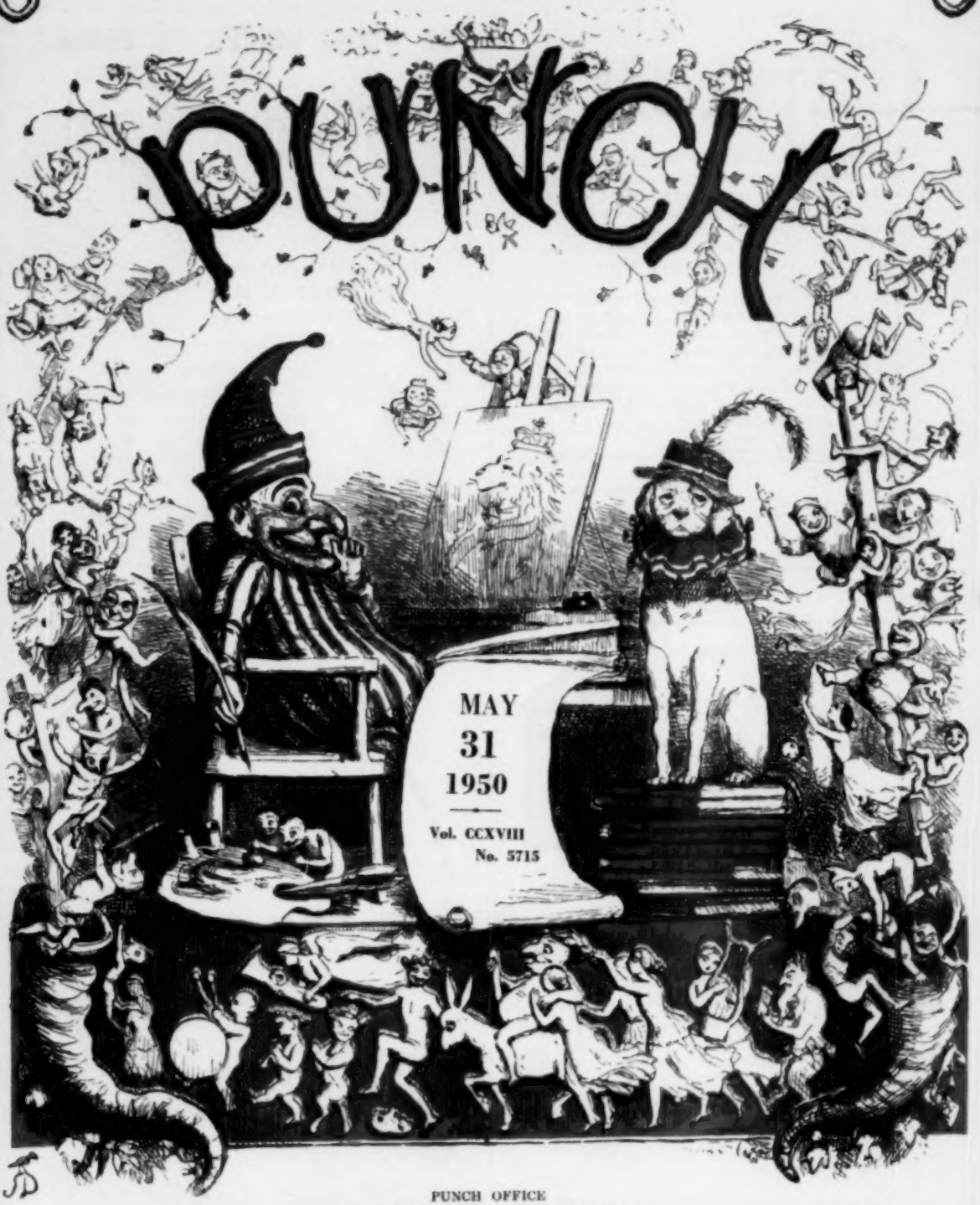
6D PUNCH OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI—WEDNESDAY, MAY 31 1950 6D

PUNCH



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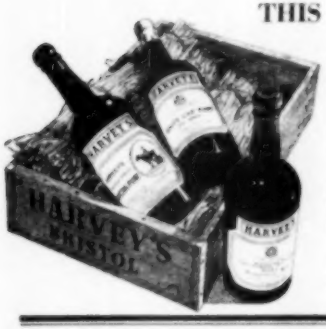

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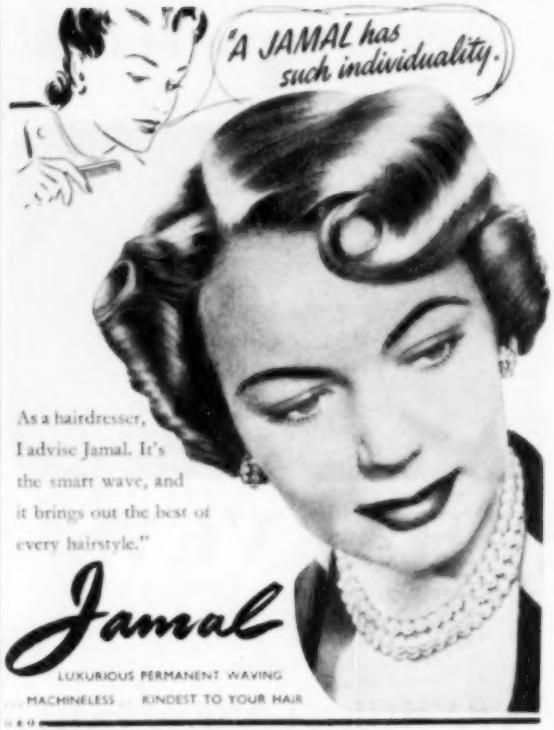

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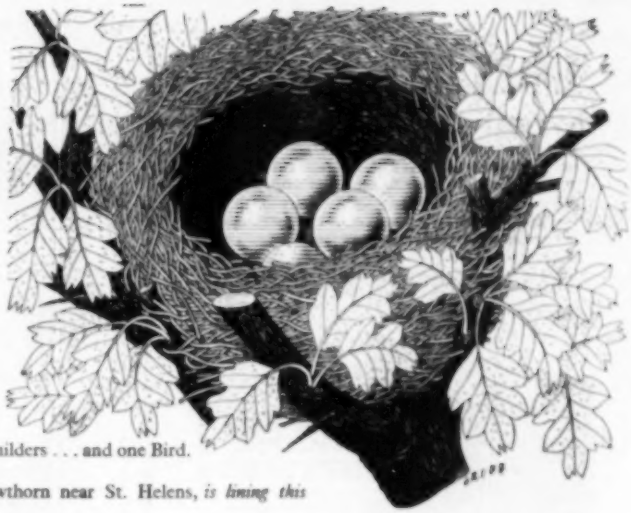

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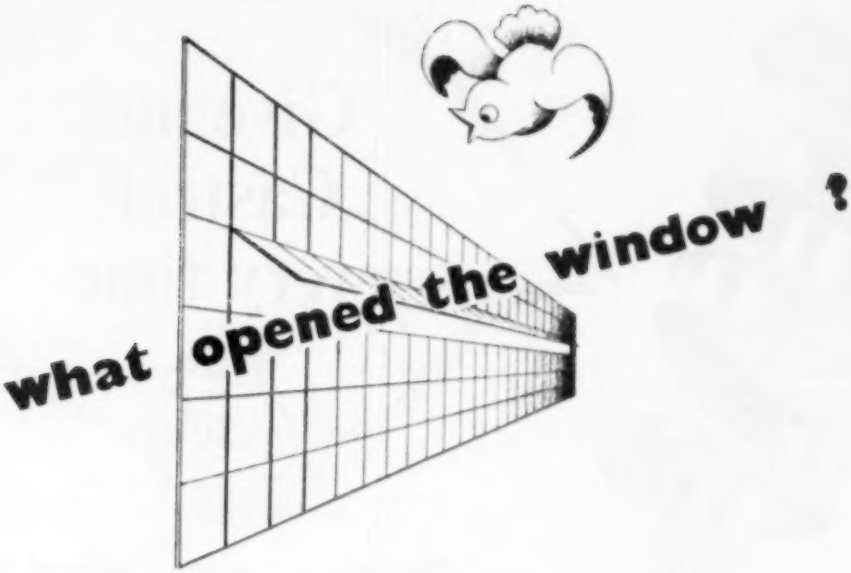
H-P 319



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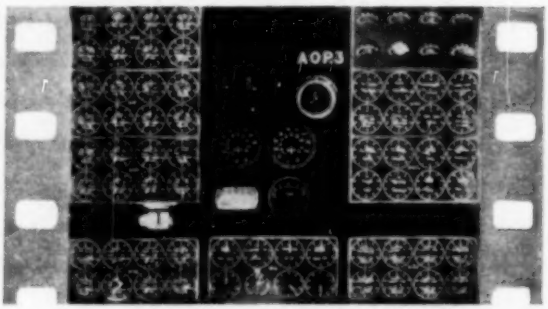
How photography helps

THE BRABAZON BUILDERS



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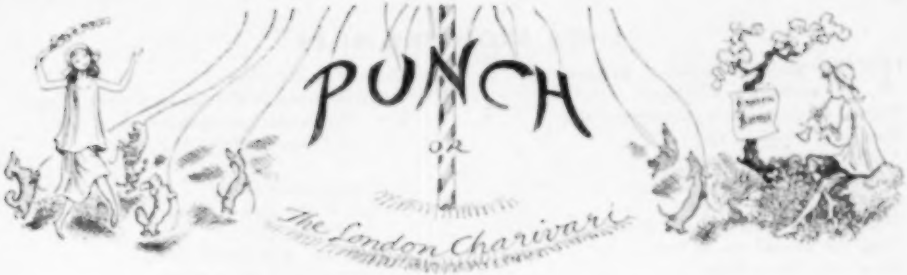


CHARIVARIA

A CONSERVATIVE Party leaflet complains that Mr. Aneurin Bevan always tells the same old story about housing. His accommodation address.

A columnist suggests that many of the people travelling about on peace missions are too old. All the same they are probably the only ones who would be able to recognize peace if they saw any.

"The recently formed Nottingham Post Office Choral Society gave a concert in the Scouts' Hall, Mansfield Road, Nottingham, last night, when they had an audience of about 2."

"Nottingham Guardian"

Come, come; let's get it exact.

Seaside hotels no longer expect guests to take their own towels, says a holiday article. It is hoped, however, that they will not take the management's.

A sports writer finds that most professional boxers keep good hours and retire early at night. And, of course, do their best to rise before ten.

At Last

"ATTRACTIONS AT THE APOLLO
NO SHOW
TO-NIGHT."

Advt. in West Indian paper

Stellenbosch University Debating Society has passed a resolution that "the English language has no chance of survival." Still, most of us have a smattering of American.

The National Allotments and Gardens Society invite gardeners all over the country to raise a special flower to be the emblem of the Festival of Britain. Is Thrift eligible?

"The precise date of the flight has still not yet been fixed but it will probably take place in about three weeks' time—and it will make African aviation history by bringing London within twelve hours' flying time of London."

"East African Standard"

Anyone who wants to make aviation history should try Africa first.

At Lille, France, a man is engaged on a forty-five-day fast while lying in a transparent coffin on broken glass and surrounded by snakes. *Pravda* will no doubt seize on this as one of the risks inherent in capitalist society.

LINES FROM THE HILLS

THESE are the shapes of harmony—
Wheat blades, laid level
Pressed by the wind in running parallel
Row after rippling row
Along the furrows' flow.

Grey gulls, white tipped,
Flecks of the waters, bits of spume snipped
From the fringed sea, to flirt
About her foamy skirt.

Links of bright rains
Tying the earth to the sun with silver chains.
The willow's straight upshoot,
And the down-stroke of the root.

Gold rays outspreading
Broad on the sunset flood: and sea lanes leading
Home. The pale young moon
Climbing to her high throne.

NOUGHTS AND CROSSES

YOU could have knocked me down with a feather when I learned that William Wordsworth pronounced his *Os* as *Aws*, though perhaps if I had been more carefully educated I should have known.

Miss Helen Darbishire proves this conclusively in her Clark lectures which have recently been republished.

I heard a thousand blended notes
As in a grove I sat reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

Notes and thoughts make an exact rhyme here, and the pronunciation of note, she points out, is corroborated by a letter of Wordsworth's about a twenty-pound note. "If the *nought* should happen to be lost upon the road," the poet writes (though why not rawd?). One is lost in admiration of the indefatigable work of the scholar, but at the same time the wildest fancies are let loose in the irreverent mind. Did Wordsworth really pronounce all his *Os* as *Aws*? And how should he be read to satisfy one's own ear, or in what fashion be read aloud to the listener?

There was a time when meadow (meddaw—no, more like medda, I think), *grawve and stream . . .*

(One is tempted to say strame, for the variation of vowel sounds is obviously of supreme importance.)

The rainbaw comes and gaws
And lovely is the raws . . .

One gets used to it after a time and the shock wears off.

Have sight of Prawcteus rising from the sea
Or hear auld Triton blaw his wreathèd horn.

That, I think, is rather more difficult. We have grown accustomed to hearing Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton read aloud with some attempt to produce the pronunciation of the period, but not poets of the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries, unless they were writing in dialect; and the very insolent reader might say that he wishes some of the children and rustics in Wordsworth's poems always did use dialect, for it would make them rather more exciting.

Thy limbs will shortly be twice as stout as they are now,
Then I'll yawk thee to my cart like a pawny in the plough . . .

It is a point to be remembered, and not with Wordsworth alone.

"But I never acquired a just pronunciation," says Sir Walter Scott, "nor could I read with much propriety." One should never permit a mere Englishman, therefore, to read Scott aloud. I submit these reflections to the B.B.C.

But a still wilder speculation arises. Men of letters, men of distinction in any of the arts do not usually commit their provincial or rustic pronunciation to the letters they write to their friends. I suppose that an eminent actor who, in taking the part of Richard the Third, habitually cries "A harse, a harse, my kingdom for a harse" would be unlikely to put down in his correspondence "I had a good harse for the three-thirty the other day," unless he was trying to be funny. I suppose that a Professor of Moral Philosophy from Lancashire wishing to take a party of friends for a jaunt on the Thames at Richmond (a thing which must frequently occur) would approach the man who hires out river craft, and say:

"I want a bowt."

"Abaht wot?"

"A bowt, I tell tha."

"Abaht hah many?"

The conversation would be endless, and the professor would be simply obliged to point at the thing with his umbrella. But the same professor would not, if deserting his wife and fastening a note to the pin-cushion, use the sentence "I am leaving you for ever, and taking the bowt to Paris to-night."

Yet this apparently, or something like this, is what Wordsworth was doing when he alluded to his twenty-pound nought. One is driven to the conclusion that the Sage of Rydal Mount was being playful when he wrote the word; that he had suffered some good-humoured banter about his accent and his Cumbrian burr, and was appearing, rather pleasantly and unexpectedly, in the guise of a humorist.

I could go on like this for a long time, but perhaps I have quawted enow. EVOE

DUNKIRK

JUNE 4 1940

"Always be kind to dragons when you grow up, darling—if it hadn't been for a dragon your father and I might never have met."

WHO GOES THERE?

A NOBLE lord was recently reported by *The Times* as saying, in a debate in the House of Lords, that on Easter Sunday "a Communist disguised as an American" got into the pulpit at Notre Dame in Paris and shouted unpleasant things.

"A Communist disguised as an American." It is a remarkably provocative phrase. What does a Communist look like? What does an American look like? What does an American Communist look like? How would an American Communist disguise himself as an American non-Communist, or even a non-Communist from some other country.

It is only fair to note that the noble lord actually said "a Communist disguised as a *Dominican*." That, indeed, is how the young man who created the disturbance was dressed—in a Dominican monk's white, homespun cassock. He had also shaved his head.

Still, the possibility mistakenly suggested by *The Times* is there. The United States is a determinedly anti-Communist country, and a Communist might well think of disguising himself as an American. Obviously to *The Times* parliamentary reporter it seemed a perfectly feasible thing for him to do. Nor can it have seemed unlikely to the readers of *The Times*; no letters arguing against it have appeared in that paper's columns. The fact is that it has all the audacity of the successful grand-scale impersonation, like the war-time spy who puts on the enemy's uniform. He runs an awful risk, but by the sheer daring of what he does he may be able to bring it off.

The Communist ordered to disguise himself as an American might find it difficult, however, for American dress varies by region and occupation. While this would give him a wide choice, he would have to watch his step. He couldn't, for example, wear a white linen suit (deep south) with cowboy boots (south-west) and a miner's lamp (mining). That would give the game away at once. The situation is further complicated by the fact that some Americans—Secretary of State Acheson is one—are considered to dress in the style of Savile Row.

The Communist, therefore, especially in Paris, would probably play it safe and disguise himself as an American tourist. This is a realm of greater exactitude. It has been said of American tourists that their gaberdine suits and cameras have almost become a uniform. Perhaps this is what *The Times* man had—subconsciously—in mind.

In the modern world the possibilities of disguise are infinite. How much more effective the stalwart of British Caribbean federation if he leads people to believe he comes

from Ecuador! Think of the Scottish Covenanter in the guise of a Canadian advocate of Social Credit who secretly believes that unicameral legislation would solve most problems. Or camouflaged as a former croupier at Monte Carlo whose citizenship is in dispute between Italy and Yugoslavia. Who could hope to penetrate so diabolically clever a mask?

Nor is this all idle fancy. The canniest impersonation of the moment is undoubtedly that of the tiny fraction of the Russian population which is recorded as voting against the approved candidates in an election. How do they disguise themselves? That would be worth knowing.

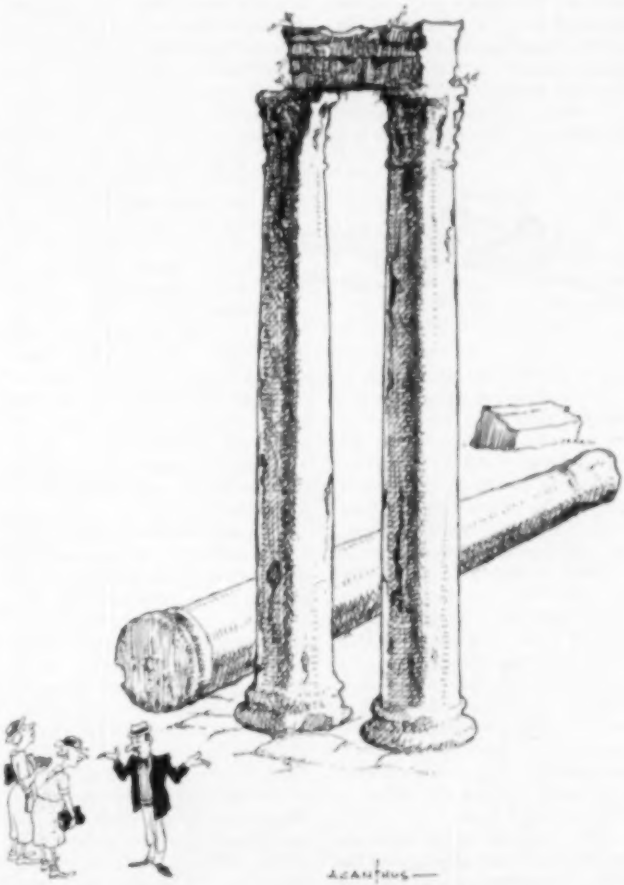
Some disguises, it is true, are so rudimentary as to be child's play to the trained observer—the Tory in the Socialist ranks, for instance, or the Socialist among the Tories. These concealments are quickly seen through, and their perpetrators sent packing across the aisle. On the other hand, remember Lenin going through Germany on his way to lead the Russian revolution disguised as a trained seal—or was it a sealed train?

In the present parliamentary situation a thorough knowledge of disguises could be extremely valuable. Let us say the Tories are planning a snap division on a major issue. Many of them do not show up in the House of Commons . . . at least, that is the outward impression. This lulls the Government Whips into relaxing their efforts. In fact the Tories are passing themselves off as Montenegrins, dropping in at the House on a casual visit. The moment the division is called, off with the Montenegrin garb (a shoe that curls up at the toes is the only item that comes to mind) and into the Lobby they go. The Government is turned out.

This brings us back to the American Communist. Agreed that he is not worth worrying about, but what, in a world of disguises, can he do? There is only one answer: he must adopt the guise that is least expected—beard, wild eye and smoking bomb. He might get away with that.

CLERKS

BASE meagre men, veins varicose with ink
And faces scarred with daily emptiness,
The floating weed ambitious not to sink,
The beggars at the board of happiness;
Souls willing prisoners in privet walls,
Strangers to beauty and eternity;
Let hairy artists talk; the garden calls,
Congratulate yourself on sanity.
Unfurl your paper banners in the train,
Prim emblems of discretion's constancy,
Rule ledgers neatly, blot your books and brain
And senseless live in servile infancy.
So balance, shuffle, drink your cups of tea!
I would not care; but one of you is me.



"Si, signora, the Australians passed through here in '44."

MESSING ABOUT IN BOATS

"TAKE, O boatman, thrice thy fee." This improbable remark, which my *Dictionary of Quotations* attributes to J. L. Uhland, must have been made on some stream less commercialized than the Thames, where the multiplication is done for one. The intending holiday-maker who does not own a boat needs not

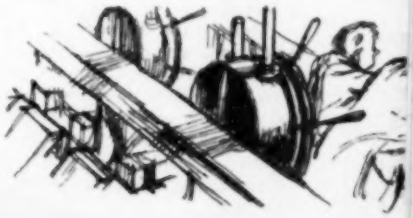
only a love of water, a sense of history and an eye for scenery but plenty of hard cash. How much he will have to pay depends on the type and size of the craft he hires, the part of the river, the time of year, the day of the week, the hour of the day, the weather and luck. Any of these factors might increase the price; nobody I have consulted has mentioned any factors which might lower it. Probably in a seasonal trade in which overheads continue even in blizzards it is only to be expected that hay will be made while the sun shines. However, if you like walking there is always the towpath. So much for the brutal facts upon which your trip will have to be based. Once on the water you will soon forget them.

The pleasures of the river are the opposite of the pleasures of the road. Launches which go fast enough to make a wash get frowned upon and Boat Race crews are not licensed to carry passengers. Again, while the car-owner regards the surface on which he drives as a necessary evil, the less obtrusive the better, the river traveller likes to have the water continually present in his consciousness. He looks at his highway frequently and regards anything that distracts attention from it with suspicion. Trippers may long for the next town or a nice collision to watch; the river-lover just wants the stream to flow evenly for ever. Motorists are time-fiends. They compare notes on how long they took from place to place. There are clocks on their dashboards, and if these do not actually go they are at least reminders that in the motoring world time and distance are of equal importance. On the river time scarcely exists, which must complicate the hiring out of craft by the hour: how can the terrestrial values of the time-ridden shore be projected across the water?

The river is made for loafing, but loafing with style. Drifting sideways and landing up in mud is carefree enough, but it lacks elegance. The ideal is to get the maximum progress in the right direction with the minimum effort. One aims at the lightest possible push of the punt-pole, the airiest flick of the paddle, the softest murmur of the engine. The real waterman can be recognized by the way he gently varies his background without any apparent cost to himself. It is true that one does see people on the river who refuse to accept its manners and behave as if they were on a tram, even looking impatient at locks; but after a few visits the spirit of the Thames moderates and refines them.

Some people disapprove of the portable wireless sets which so many craft carry. But as they require much less work than gramophones they are nearer to the ideal of complete inertia; they also require less effort than a guitar. Music is traditionally associated with water, and while tinkly little tunes from the eighteenth century may be the most fitting for a river the gay vitality of a modern dance-tune is no bad substitute.

The expert loafer reaches a depth of comfortable torpor in which a lock is an excitement to be looked forward to, a pleasure so giddy that the puritan conscience would be agreeably twinged by it. There are over forty locks between Teddington and Lechlade, each combining the social delights of a Parisian café with the spectatorial delights of a hole in the road. Manœuvring your own craft in has already displayed your skill without draining your energy, and all you have to do is to lean back and watch men slowly turning the winches to alter the water-level to your advantage. If you prefer to loaf upright you can climb up from your cushions, clamber ashore and wander about, talking to the lock-keeper, exchanging sub-human speech with fellow-loafers and encouraging



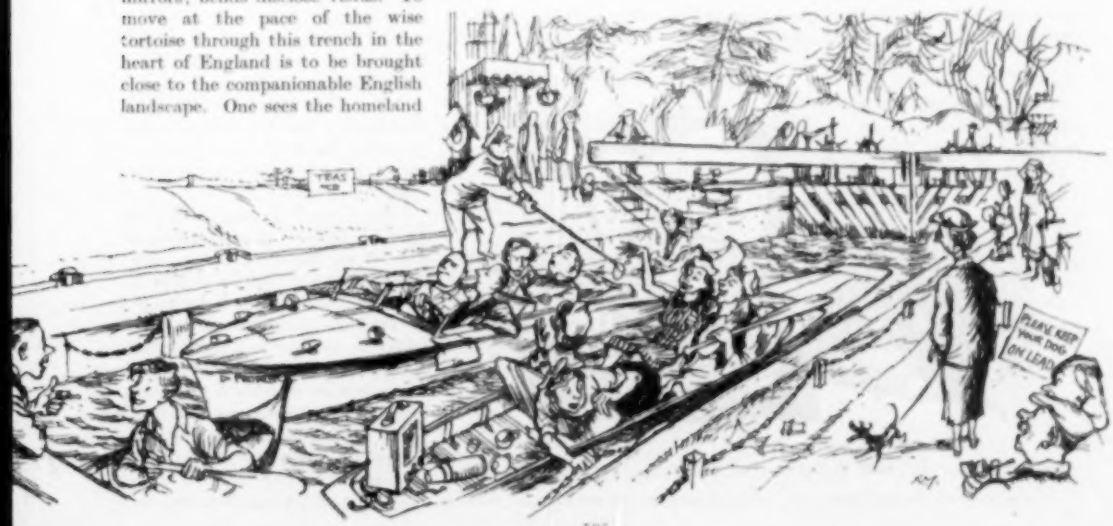
hydrostatics, or it may be hydrodynamics, with the genial vacancy of your gaze. The new boater, fresh from the world of transport, begins by being a bit doubtful about locks. However many times old hands explain it all on paper he feels that if some of the money and energy that are expended on locks could be used in flattening out the river somehow, boating on the Thames would be freed from frustration. Soon this doubt gives way to a fierce pride.

The scenery on the Thames is loafer's scenery, and can be described only in clichés. To search for novel and flashing comparisons would be to miss the point of it. Lawns really are velvet; cottages have roses round the door; swans glide gracefully; hamlets nestle; launches chug; wakes foam; overhanging boughs are reflected in rippling mirrors; bends disclose vistas. To move at the pace of the wise tortoise through this trench in the heart of England is to be brought close to the companionable English landscape. One sees the homeland softened and lightened by the omission of such breath-taking sights as mountains, gorges and moors. It is scenery to be celebrated in heroic couplets or gushes of pure song. The bank is never the same for very long, though the changes are rung on only a few features. It seldom takes more than a few bends of willow-hung, meadow-fringed water to bring you to a row of eighteenth-century villas, a quay or a bridge.

The towns in the Thames Valley have two faces. There is a gently picturesque one turned towards the river and acting as a mild contrast to meads and gardens, with ramshackle boathouses and wharves and streets leading up from them where they sell fishing tackle and cooking-stoves and sun-tan ointment. Inland there is another face, more commercial and Midland. The usual chain stores almost, but not quite, kill the market hall and the doctor's or lawyer's Queen Anne home. Past the traffic lights go buses bearing the names of remote towns, and a lot of trucks, for you are in the middle of what is now one of the country's greatest industrial regions. It is a refinement of loafing to tie up on the town quay, have a drink at a violently de-modernized inn and stand for a moment in the busy, modernistic street. Then, after a little casual ingratitude towards the Industrial Revolution—which may have made your holiday possible—you potter back to the water and cease to be amphibious.

There are no parts of the river which lack defenders and celebrants, from the Matthew Arnold to the Whistler country, and defenders usually champion their chosen area as it was when they first knew it. New building on the banks, a straight cut making bends into backwaters, the conversion of a Georgian pub to Tudor will make the champion furious, but not for long: the water cure will soon soothe his nerves, and the ravagers of beauty spots rely on this. The past hangs over the Thames likes a heat haze. It is not merely the past of formal historical incident—what happened at Runnymede or where Cæsar or William the Conqueror crossed—nor even of literary association—Pope's villa, the stretch where Shelley wrote "The Revolt of Islam," the scene of Wilkes's revels at Medmenham—it is a past compounded of generations of happy ease, and even the rawest recruit to motor launches or rowing boats inherits it and murmurs, as the water laps against the keel, "O my Henley and my Marlow, long ago."

R. G. G. Price



AT THE PICTURES

In a Lonely Place—Ambush

I HAD expected *In a Lonely Place* (Director: NICHOLAS RAY) to be interesting, and it turns out to be much more: always entertaining in detail, thoroughly engrossing as a whole, and very well done. Mr. RAY directed the excellent *They Live By Night*; that was about simpler people than those concerned here, where the pattern of incident is on the whole more conventional, but the wit of the writing and the speed and skill of the direction make this equally satisfying to see. I said something last week about the use in a murder story of amusing incident and amusing dialogue for small-part players; *In a Lonely Place* is full of admirable examples of both, always cleverly placed with an eye to the total effect, so that the mood of the narrative changes with an orderly, developing emphasis and mounts without a false note to its true ironic climax. HUMPHREY BOGART appears as a Hollywood screenwriter subject to sudden unpredictable fits of violent rage, GLORIA GRAHAME as the girl who loves him; the basis of the story—though the incident in the main is much like the stuff of a conventional whodunit—is the gradual undermining of her trust, her gradually deepening suspicion that he may after all have committed the murder of which the police suspect him. This is conveyed with beautiful economy, speed and imagination, without an unnecessary scene or a wasted shot, and the whole is a picture that will give great pleasure to all who don't demand that their emotions shall be deeply engaged. I think it is enough in this essentially artificial sort of story that the principals should arouse one's intellectual sympathy, which here they very competently do; and there are several excellent players of excellently-written "bit" parts, particularly the cheerful, good-natured, ordinary hat-check girl (MARTHA STEWART) who eagerly gives the writer her outline of a successful novel. I enjoyed this; knowing the *dénouement* and every turn of the plot on the way to it, I could still see it again with pleasure now.

[Ambush

Mass Dust-biting

Unnamed cast of thousands

Ambush (Director: SAM WOOD) is somewhat on the same lines, or at least concerns the same sort of characters (U.S. Cavalry and Indians) at about the same period (within two years), as *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*. The fact that it doesn't seem as good can be put down partly to its lack of a central emotional idea, partly to its even more frequent interruption by feminine influence, and partly to the very simple fact that it isn't in colour. This is plain Indian-fighting and rescue stuff; the two-men-for-one-girl situation can stir interest only in those who, no matter what the film, are profoundly concerned about whether JOHN HODIAK rather than ROBERT TAYLOR proves to be the lucky man; and the scenery—well, these mountains, rocks and deserts (and for that matter Indians) are certainly more impressive in colour. Nevertheless, this is well made and often good to look at. The key of the camera-work is very subdued throughout (there are many night scenes), but pleasing things are done with half-light and heavy shade; and the climactic ambush itself is exciting, and produces enough bodies to satisfy the most bloodthirsty.

* * * * *

Survey

Readers in London will find the new Disney, *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad*, worth a visit. The Mr. Toad half of this is delightful stuff, the best Disney for years.

Of the releases, the most interesting are the pair noticed here last week: *D.O.A.*, a good murder-and-suspense story with much entertaining detail, and *Champagne for Cæsar*, which is thoroughly enjoyable although its satire is weakened by a sentimental ending.

RICHARD MALLETT

[In a Lonely Place

Still He Wished for Company

Laurel Gray—GLORIA GRAHAME; *Dixon Steele*—HUMPHREY BOGART

THE GUIDING HAND

I WROTE to my mother and asked her to send me Uncle Philip's address.

My mother wrote back and said why did I want Uncle Philip's address? I had neither seen him nor had any communication with him since my thirteenth birthday, when he had given me a doll and I had been so unpleasant that my mother had had to go and have tea with Aunt Gertrude. I must have some *special* reason for wanting his address. *Was it because he was a lawyer?*

What had I done? If I had done anything my mother and father were the people I should write to. My mother was horrified to think what I might have done because I was so silly I might have done anything. Sometimes I was so silly my mother thought I did it on purpose. If I was facing some crisis I must tell her, and not try to struggle through it by myself. My mother knew very well what I was like in a crisis. I did one of two things—either stood like an idiot with my mouth open or became helpless with inane laughter as I did when the pipes unfroze over my father. She had never forgotten that and she didn't know what she was going to do next winter because the only plumber she knew had gone to Australia. She couldn't understand why people were rushing off to all sorts of places when there was so much to do over here. Look at Uncle Harry who went to New Zealand twenty-six years ago next July. He hadn't even thanked her for her Christmas present. After all that knitting. Although it was quite typical. She would never forget how as a child he had put frogs' spawn in the cupboard under the stairs so that when three weeks later someone went to get the bulbs out there were frogs all over the house for days.

I *must* let them know when I needed help. That was the obvious and natural thing for a daughter to do. What was the use of my being a Girl Guide and a patrol leader all those years if I didn't know the sensible course to take in an emergency? She said at the time—when I used to come home covered in mud after tracking—that she didn't see how it was ever going to help me.

Now, would I please write straight away?

So I wrote and explained that I wanted Uncle Philip's address simply so that I could ask him for my cousin Janet's address.

My mother wrote and said why did I want Janet's address? My mother didn't want me to write to Janet. She didn't want me to know Janet. She remembered very well saying to my father years ago that she didn't want me to know Janet. She would never forget how when we were children we had gone out together one afternoon and Janet had made me play Red Indians, forced me to crawl through ditches, insisted on my climbing trees, ordered me to paddle in a stagnant pond and lose my socks, terrorized me into lighting a camp-fire and singeing my eyelashes, and then had the impudence to come home looking as clean as when she set out while I looked as though I had been shipwrecked on a desert island and run over by a tram.

My mother quite realized that I was no longer a child. She would never dream of interfering in my choice of friends nor of trying to influence me in any way whatever, but she absolutely forbade my having anything to do with Janet.

I wrote and said I had met Janet at a party. She was going to America soon and wanted my home address so she could send my mother some nylons. I had forgotten to give it to her. So I thought I would write.

My mother hasn't answered yet.

"He won't sunbathe—he says he doesn't like to attract attention."

Opportunity Knocks

"The Crown Jewels, 2*d*. (By post, 3*d*.)."

Monthly Catalogue of H.M.S.O.

POLYNESIA INVADES COFFEE-SHOP

ONE of the drawbacks of having a job that ties you to an office desk all day long is that by ten-thirty, which is usually reckoned the earliest you can decently go out for morning coffee, you have not only read your morning paper from beginning to end but also decided what horses you would back if you had any money to waste backing horses, and done as much of the crossword as lies within the united capacity of yourself and the wage-slaves at adjacent desks. This is liable to leave you staring glumly over your coffee at the headlines on the paper being read by the man at the next table, and when one of those headlines is "NINEPENCE THREATENS CABINET" the only thing to do is to withdraw the mind inwards and think about something else.

It was fortunate that on this particular morning I was able to find in an obscure corner of my own newspaper a small paragraph which I had previously overlooked, headed "SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDS." In the South Seas as I knew them ninepence never threatened anybody; we were all much too busy keeping out of the way of sharks and cannibals to trouble our heads over such a trivial sum. Finance did indeed play a part in our adventures, but not in any such pettifogging spirit; usually it was a cargo of bullion, lusted by head-hunters from a Government cutter that had immolated itself on a coral reef, and after we had retrieved the bullion from the unsophisticated savages in exchange for two dozen sticks of trade tobacco we would very likely have to defend it, besieged on a dizzy headland with no other food than octopus, breadfruit, yams, sucking-pig, taro and pineapples, against the rapscallion crew of Billy Leach's blackbirding schooner, which, as ill-luck would have it, had chosen that particular juncture for its annual raid on the indigenous population of the island. These little difficulties were all in the day's work, and we thought no more of them than we did of the hurricanes that periodically swept our masts overboard and drove us clear up the beach and half-way through the coconut grove, so that we woke up next morning with our bowsprit sticking through the window of Lascar George's store. We always got a good laugh out of that, though somehow Lascar George could never see the funny side of it.

The man at the next table turned over a page of his paper, revealing the heading: "FEW CHANGED THEIR COALMAN." There were, needless to say, no coalmen in the South Seas in my day. The great beauty of life in the Islands, I reflected, was that each island was entirely self-contained. You could reach it or get away from it only in a schooner (there was something about the South Seas, we never quite knew what, that made any other rig than a schooner's impracticable), and while you were on it the world was bounded by its dazzling coral beach. Once you had departed, moreover, everything that had happened on the island became like a Technicolor dream. The result was that life in the Islands was a series of short, vivid episodes each complete in-itself; it was like starting life over again every six days. One week we would be playing picquet with a Chinese trader in Bougainville for stakes that began at five hundred sovereigns a game and mounted in geometrical progression; the next we were pounding ninety fathoms of rusty chain on the deck of the *Mauna Loa*, trying to sweat the trade-gin out of our system before we reached Fitu-Iva and old Schriebner's fabulous pearl auction. Cornered in our tiny cabin by a half-crazy remittance man with a Mauser pistol, we held him in talk while we gradually edged our left hand under the pillow for our own revolver; but all the time we knew subconsciously that in a fortnight from now his unshaven face, his red-rimmed eyes, his finger trembling on the hair-trigger would be no more than a happy memory, because we would be going down with the native divers in Wiki-Wiki lagoon (fourteen fathoms, and every day four or five of the natives got the "bends" and were borne away howling in agony) to tear the oysters from the coral bottom and stuff them in the canvas bag tied to our waist.

Those were the days, I reflected, as the man at the next table folded his paper again and gave me a view of the headline "PROVISIONAL BALL TANGLE." I turned to the small paragraph in my own paper, but it was all about conferences and economic difficulties. Evidently things had changed in the South Pacific since I was there. I don't suppose Billy Leach or old Schriebner would have known an economic difficulty if you had shoved one under their noses. Why, even Lascar George when he was broke would have the initiative to borrow a stick or two of trade tobacco and go and swap them for a bag of gold bars somewhere in the head-hunting country.

"Anything else, sir?" said the waitress at my elbow.

"Toasted breadfruit," I said absently, "and a pot of trade gin."

I got over the difficulty by explaining that I had been thinking it was tea-time.

G. D. R. DAVIES

THE PORTENT

HOW reckless loving parents are
Who buy their boy a kiddy-car!
His mummy thinks him angel-sweet,
With earnest face and busy feet
That sturdily the pedals ply,
As with indulgence you and I
Evade the zigzag wild career
His baby hands delight to steer.
Alas, they do not think or care
What for the future they prepare!
Each outing is a trial trip,
A speed-fiend's fierce apprenticeship;
The chubby cherub we allow
To chase us off the footpath now
Before we guess that he has grown
Will claim the highway as his own.
In that loved toy they do not know
A juggernaut in embryo,
Nor as to-morrow's road-hog see
Their footpath piglet pink and wee.

W. K. HOLMES

"D'you mean to tell me it's taken you nearly all day just to make a couple of stalactites?"

"Yes, certainly. What sort of favour?"

THE MUSIC MAKERS

I BELIEVE that there is a tendency nowadays for people not to learn the piano unless they show some faint talent. That, in my day, would have reduced the number of piano-learners by about half and would have cut out a lot of piano-learning's most characteristic effects: the bumbling scales; the arpeggios that fell to pieces half way up; those easier allegro bits of Beethoven sonatas, where the left hand works so much harder and faster than the right that even a listener's wrist aches; and those chords in E flat which learners sometimes crashed out, richly and confidently, to impress the outside world. The outside world was the locker-banging and shouting that went on in the cloakroom opposite the music-room windows, and learners knew how well their music could be heard, because in their off-piano hours they got an earful there of other learners, whacking away at a *chaconne* and piling up suddenly in a heap of semi-quavers.

There was a stage before this when learners practised on the family piano and logged up the day's run in a notebook they had to take to school every Thursday. That was at the very beginning of their musical career, when they went to one of those dear little day-schools that are so obviously an ordinary house cleared of the furniture. They began by playing C D E F G F E D C with a penny on the back of each hand. When the penny fell off they knew their hand was bouncing about, and they knew also that their music-mistress would have to rake under the piano for the penny. Probably this was why that stage never lasted long. Anyway, by the time learners got to tacking up the piano with an arpeggio in F sharp minor no untreated coin would have survived the bend.

After a study or two and a simple sound-picture of an Old Mill Wheel learners were given a book of piano duets called Piano Duets. Learners think it funny that some of these nameless, never again encountered, compositions should have stayed so firmly in their memories to this day, every single note of them. I mean, of course, every double note, because the tune was played in octaves by both hands working as one, except perhaps on the trills. Naturally enough the learner had the top, or primo, half of the piano. And, also naturally enough, the secundo half (if secundo is the word I want for the print at the head of the page that learners never looked at) made most of the noise, gave the piece a certain depth and richness and acted as a metronome.

It was only in these duets that learners' music-mistresses had the chance of proving themselves of L.R.A.M. quality. The rest of the time they played little bits of "In the Woodlands," leaning sideways to reach the bottom notes, or pointed a reproachful pencil at a *cresc.* I do hope they realized how staggeringly infallible their pupils thought them, how perpetually and hideously right, never more so than when they started nagging about the phrasing. A phrase is, to the best of learners' present knowledge, a horizontal bracket trying to persuade its public to think of the notes within it as a single musical statement rather than as a series of individual achievements. It wasn't that learners didn't know this, it was that they had so many other things to think of. Octaves, by the way, were rather a feature too. It was a common experience with learners that they *could* manage an octave, just, but caught the inner note each side as well. Schumann wrote a suite called "Carnival" specially for these people, and Beethoven wrote his sonatas to prove (as if learners did not know it) that the easy patches of life are followed by the tough.

By the time they were playing sonatas learners were old enough to be in the locker-banging world, and might even get involved in such musical activities as the Sight-reading Comp., the Speech Day concert, the Sousa marches to which their fellows tramped out of the Hall after morning prayers. The Sight-reading was mere predetermined luck, but the others were work and meant choosing A Piece that the learners' friends would for ever after associate with the learners, and getting a priority for the dining-room piano after supper, and even being given time off from real work to practise on an alarmingly loud grand piano in the hall.

But those were very advanced learners. There were humbler ones who for the sheer love of their art, or because it was raining, liked to gather their age-group round the yellow-keyed upright in the house

cloakroom and raise the ceiling with "Sweet Echo, Sweetest Nymph." It was as accompanists that learners, that is learners who were good enough, excelled; they were important, everyone round the piano could hear them and yet no one was listening, so they could always miss out the difficult section of a chord, or even pack up for a few bars. Another department that gave them scope was the Dance Band. Two learners, one playing three-quarters of the notes of "Whispering" on the right-hand half of the piano, and the other playing roughly the same thing on the other half, together sounded almost as good as a professional dance-pianist, if only because dance-pianists in those days played so worthily, almost stodgily.

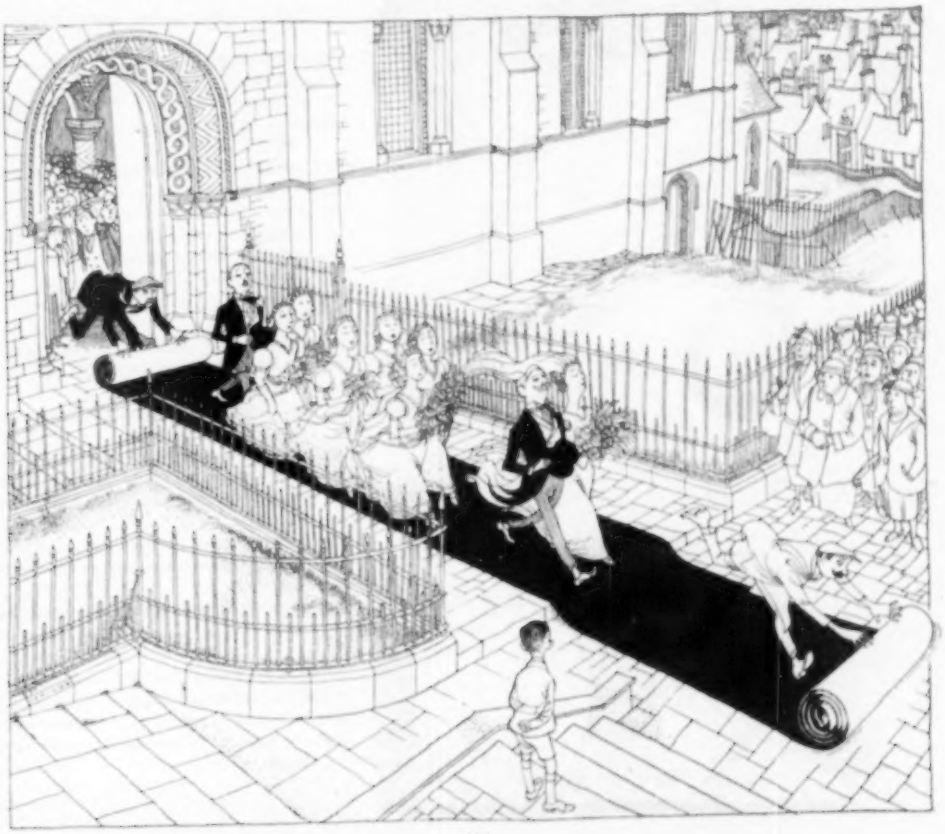
But even the learners who got nowhere, not even so far as augmenting the treble in "When It's Night-time in Italy It's Wednesday Over Here"—even they have found their training of lasting value. They can hear music by seeing it in their minds as a lot of notes they can't read; and when listening to a symphony on the wireless they can show off by going to the piano, hitting the D that the *Radio Times* says is the key, and finding it to be very nearly the note they wanted. ANDE

BACK ROOM JOYS

Sealing Wax

O WHAT is there Man's nature lacks
That is supplied by sealing wax?
What lustfulness in heart or head,
That looks upon it when it's red
And makes us struggle more than slightly
Not to spend our money lightly?
Does its close-compacted smoothness
Compensate our own uncouthness?
Does it, almost wetly shining,
Set the gastric juices pining?
In our deeps does it inspire
Primal thoughts of playing with fire,
Make remembered pulses throb
Thinking of the melted blob,
The well-licked coin, the crisp impress,
The mild surprise at our success?
All these may be the reasons why
It isn't easy not to buy;
But normally most people feel,
Just simply, sealing-wax-appeal.

JUSTIN RICHARDSON

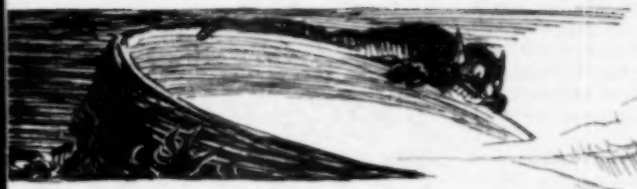


TOP

THE Weather Clerk was working in the Palace of the Clouds,
his Æolian harp a-singing like the *Flying Dutchman's* shrouds.

Bats—wings outspread—above his head, his astrolabe at hand,
he played with heaps of blue and red and black and silver sand,
for he practised divination by sound, old-fashioned machines
such as shooting random arrows and observing jumping beans;
by methods plain and fancy, and by magic black and white;
by meteoromancy, and by ears of corn in blight;
by geloscopy from dawn till dusk, star-gazing half the night;
by balancing of hatchets, and by listening to the croak of jewel-frogs (non-edible); by drifting altar-smoke;
by crystal ball, and burning-glass; by swinging golden rings;
by watching birds peck seeds of grass; by casting stones from slings;
by dubious ways and chancy, known to Lucifer's mad rebels;
by aleuromancy, and by blindfold choice of pebbles
by intent catoptromancy; by the dance of scarlet flames;
by—oh, horror!—necromancy, and the muttering of names;
by tripod and alembic, and the way that vapours rise
by interpreting the blinking of an alligator's eyes;
by taking haruspices (from these details I have shrunk);
and toorelay, too-oorelay! by making mices drunk;
by reading Ogham cantrips backwards in the Book of Kells;
by gyromanting widdershins, and Badness knows what else.

Now, as he was a-studying, a-studying of the signs
scribbled in the altar-ashes, all in cabalistic lines
one swivelled eye agog to scry the phases of the moon
and one askance in warlock trance—why, by the Great Horn Spoon,



ECRET

there floated through the floor of blue an orange Met. balloon!
Transfixed with rage the seething Sage its rise one moment eyed,
then snatching up his burning-glass its sizzling rays to guide
"I'll teach them," shrieked the Weather Clerk, "this *ballon* to *essai*!"
and popped it like the bubble on South Sea contango day.

A-rushing to his cloud-machine he stirred that devil's broth,
and poured into the mixture all the vials of his wrath.
He spat out incantations, and "ABRACADABRA!" screamed:
cloud-dragons, gryphons, hippogriffs into the æther streamed,
cloud hippopotamuses all aswirl in indigo,
and cumulus-nimbus, thunderblack cloud-mammoths in a row.
He gave them purple lightnings super-super-supersonic,
he gave them balls of fire, and his briefing was laconic.

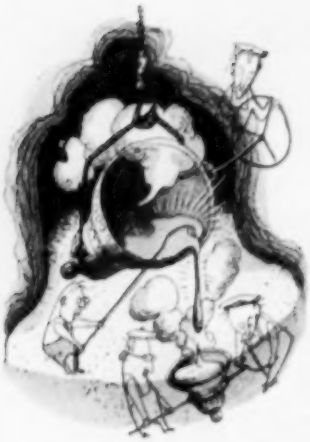
There's not a weather station left, and not one instrument:
the aneroids are all annealed, the Poles themselves are bent.

The Government have kept the news from you (but not from me):
Where do those saucers fly from, eh? Why have the B.B.C.
changed the dear, familiar wavelengths? It's as obvious as The Gap.

"But here, hold on a minute. Come: the weather news on tap
is every bit as accurate," I seem to hear you say—
"Look what the radio said last night: see what it's like to-day."

Ah. They've hung a strip of seaweed in the studio. Don't fret.
When that is wet they forecast dry; when dry they forecast wet.

R. C. SCRIVEN



LINES COMPOSED ABOVE TINTINNABULATION

NOT many summers ago the annual Garden Party and Fête of a Surrey village was ruined by bell-ringers. It happened this way: the ringers decided, *in camera*, that the occasion called for one of their noblest efforts in overtime, so they installed themselves, adequately provisioned, in the church, locked its doors against intervention and their hearts against clemency, and crashed into the first brave notes of a peal of Grandsire Triples.

For a time the party and fête quickened and brightened under the stimulating surge of din, but gradually everyone, even the vicar, realized that the entire programme was in jeopardy. Mrs. Ponsonby-Hook (now in South Africa) refused to judge the "Dogs Bred Locally" while they were so obviously unnerved by the musical storm; and Miss Hackett wanted to know why the Women's Institute had paid fifteen pounds ten shillings to hire a dance band for the vicarage lawn when not even the saxophones could be heard.

The village elders, including Sir Charles (a sort of unofficial squire in those parts), were then instructed to climb the tower to the ringers, and this, with much puffing, blowing and cursing, they did; but though they hammered for more than half an hour on the door of the bell-ringing chamber they failed to gain either admittance or audience. Not a ringer could or would leave his rope.

As I say, the party and fête was a fiasco, but the Grandsire Triples were accomplished without mishap in three hours, fourteen minutes dead; and there is now an oak plaque in the belfry to commemorate the feat.

It has been ever thus with bells: either they are heard as heavenly harmony or they are an unwholesome racket, fit company for the road drill, the backfiring bus and the doodle-bug. They are either loved or loathed; loved by the poets—Alfred ("Ring Out") Tennyson, Thomas ("Curfew Tolls") Gray, Edgar ("Bells, bells, bells, bells, bells, bells, bells") Poe, Cowper, Schiller, Shakespeare, etc.—and by at least forty thousand English bell-ringers, and loathed by

light sleepers and by people who prefer their music muted and crooned and their bells on Christmas cards. In fact many people look back wistfully to the early days of the last war as a golden age of bell-less bliss.

In this controversy I am myself neutral. I have enjoyed the Croydon-made carillon of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa; I love the throaty bellow of Big Ben, the sonorous clangour of Great Paul and Great Peter; I can enjoy the wild cacophony of bells crashing in unison and the steady tolling of a single bell tuned to a plangent, ghostly minor-ish chord. On the other hand a seemingly endless bout of change-ringing does not thrill me. I am not sufficiently interested in mathematics (I am no pools fan) to appreciate the permutations involved.

I am awed by change-ringing records when they appear in cold print, but I should not have cared to be in Appleton in 1922 when a peal of twenty-one thousand three hundred and sixty-three Stedman Caters was rung in twelve hours twenty-five minutes non-stop, or, for that matter, at Shoreditch on March 27, 1784, when a Treble Bob Royal of twelve thousand changes was achieved in nine hours five minutes. It may be that I have heard too many cracked bells, or bells tuned slightly sharp of a hacking churchyard cough. Far too many of these wrecks are still on active service when they should be at one of our three great bell-hospitals at Loughborough, Whitechapel and Croydon.

The Croydon bell-hospital, which I visited the other day, treats its patients with infinite care and understanding and soon has them back in their belfries as sound as bell-metal. The internes are all bell-ringers in their spare time and know exactly how to restore a bell to a concert-pitch of efficiency. They re-tune, wherever possible, by trimming the bell on a vertical lathe, which cuts away ribbons of metal from the inside of the bell until the strike-note, measured against the pitch of a standard tuning-fork, is exactly right. This bell-tuning business calls for extremely sensitive and practised ears, for in addition to its strike-note a bell emits a whole series of natural harmonics or partials. In a bell tuned, for example, to "Middle C" there are such overtones and undertones as the octave above, a minor third (or tierce), a perfect fifth (quint) and a "hum note" an octave below. It was explained to me that these five notes represent the basic minimum of partials; there are others, scores of them, it seems, waiting for the willing ear.

In my frustration I developed pique.

"Why you chaps bother with more than *one* bell," I said sourly to one ardent campanologist, "when it sounds like the Hallé in full blast I can't imagine."

"It's thirsty work, bell-ringing," he said, "how about a quick one?"

So we changed the subject. Afterwards I asked about the more serious stretcher-cases—the badly cracked-up and flattened bells—and learned that many of these oldsters have to be melted down and re-cast.

It may surprise and delight those who cannot bring themselves to appreciate bells to know that a large proportion of those founded in England is exported. Yes, British bells can be heard in most countries—certainly in America. In fact New York has the biggest bell (as though you didn't know) ever cast in England—the Bourdon bell of the seventy-two-bell carillon at Riverside Drive Church. It weighs eighteen and a quarter tons.

To preserve the balance between East and West, however, I ought quickly to add that larger bells, *much* larger bells, have been made in Russia. The most famous of these was the Tsar Kolokol or "King of Bells," which was cast in 1734 for the Kremlin. It weighed well over one hundred and fifty tons, was twenty feet high and twenty-two feet wide at the lip. An old print shows two dozen men trying to ring it by heaving on ropes tied to the clapper, and incidentally looking as though they could use a few cases of vodka.

If English bells can be heard throughout the world it is unlikely that the traveller or emigrant will be fortunate enough (let's say) to hear change-ringing of the English school. Change-ringing, by which I mean that peculiar non-stop variety produced by marrying mathematics with campanology, began in England some three hundred years ago, and has more or less stayed here. It is defended on innumerable grounds—that it is essentially a team or group activity (and therefore O so British, if you follow me), that it provides excellent health-giving exercise and induces longevity, and that it inspires truly glorious thirst.

At Croydon I tried a touch of change-ringing myself and discovered that I am much lighter than I had supposed. In change-ringing there is a tendency for the sally (the bit of the bell-rope striped in red, white and blue) to fly upwards at what threatens to be truly breakneck speed to the ringer. The thing to do, quite clearly, is to release the sally smartly before the feet leave the ground, and this, after a few unhappy aerial episodes, I managed to do—to the flattering relief of the assembled campanologists of Croydon.

I might mention, as a last word, that bell-ringers are pretty strict about their terminology. A peal is a term reserved for a session of change-ringing made up of at least five thousand changes or strokes; anything below this figure is dismissed as a "touch."

BERNARD HOLLOWOOD

"Why, Mrs. Blayney! I haven't seen you since that awful time we had last October."

CRISIS IN MARGINALIA?

San Marginal, *Monday*

"DOWN with Dr. Rumpl!" "Death to the crypto-inflationist tyrants!" "To the municipal waterworks with the assassins of the 25th October 1948!" With remarks like these the small change of conversation in present-day Marginalia, one's first impression is apt to be that Dr. Esteban Rumpl and his Unpopular Democrat administration are facing a crisis of some gravity.

In point of fact this is no truer to-day than it was during last autumn's drought, the December strike of the ferrous-metal workers, February's avalanches, or the purely economic crises of November, December, January, February and March. (The list seems a formidable one, until one remembers that Marginalia now ranks as one of the world's primary crisis-producing areas.)

The truth is, of course, as anyone who knows the country will confirm, that if there should ever be concerted activity by two of Marginalia's outstanding problems at once (and these now include not only her adverse trade-balance and the low purchasing-power of the *smacca* but also a declining steel industry and recent very heavy losses by the civil air-line) her precariously balanced economy might overbalance completely and Dr. Rumpl with it.

Up to now, though, the Rumpl government has, wisely, avoided trying to solve its crises, and been content to keep them moving. This is simpler than it sounds, in a country whose problems very largely cause each other. A recent crisis over the falling value of the *smacca*, for instance, was successfully linked with the increasing tendency for countries which formerly took Marginalia's rolled steel to start rolling their own, and thus brought neatly back into the field of industrial policy, where one more crisis was neither here nor there. On the other hand, the currency's present low purchasing power in terms of *schnortz* (the local spirit) is being skilfully put over as a badly needed contribution to the efficiency of the civil air-line. (The fact that the air-line's losses last year totalled *sms.* 3097, 48.2 working-days, 7 suitcases, 19 umbrellas, 5 passengers and—according to close observers—all remaining sense of direction, is fortunate from this point of view, if from no other.)

This adds one more to the list of crises Dr. Rumpl has been able to put to good use—thanks (in this case) to the opposition's blunder in demanding to have the air-line closed down. Such a step will in any case have to wait until next time it lands in Marginalian territory, by which time the crisis can probably be incorporated in an overall transport crisis, which will last, with reasonable care, until plans are complete for the annual economic policy crisis later in the year.

It is nonsense, therefore, for opponents of the Unpopular Democrats to pretend that Dr. Rumpl has not got his crises well in hand. Indeed, in one sphere—the disposal of Marginalia's accumulated surpluses—he has adopted a bold "frontal" policy, whose success has

been so spectacular that it looks like being widely adopted elsewhere. The technique is simple. Each export drive is carefully planned and the export quota of rolled steel, etc. loaded into lorries for immediate delivery. At a prearranged signal (usually at 3 o'clock in the morning) the currency is devalued, and the lorries tear over the border. By the time neighbouring countries realize what has happened the lorries have returned to base, their quota disposed of, and the *smacca* is back again on gold.

Controversy has so far centred round the questions (1) how far this policy is responsible for the recent troop movements on Marginalia's frontiers, and (2) whether, before long, some of the rolled steel may not come rolling back. Dr. Rumpl might, in this case, find himself faced with exactly the kind of external-internal crisis that would play into the hands of the left-wing Alternative Democrats, and in turn precipitate violent measures by the right-wing Comparative Plutocrats. These include many former supporters of the exiled General Zippo, and favour abolishing domestic crises altogether. They might or might not have the support of the political groups loosely combined in the Assorted Centre party (who, in theory, all favour different crises of their own) or, for that matter, of the new Independent Front-wheel Suspension party, whose aims are obscure. From Dr. Rumpl's standpoint, however, what matters is that there at present exists a tacit understanding on the need to go slow with crises for the time being, and a measure of agreement between all parties, except, possibly, the remaining supporters of General Zippo, on a limited programme of reforms including:

(1) Stern measures against the remaining supporters of General Zippo.

(2) A united front against avalanches.

(3) No export drives at weekends.

(4) High wages, salaries and expense allowances.

(5) Generous overtime.

(6) Own canteen.

(7) Write: Immigration Officer, P.O. Box 321, San Marginal.

No one pretends that this is more than a piece of window-dressing designed to obscure the real issue. Privately everybody admits that the point where the next crisis is likely to come is in the cost of living.

The budget of an unmarried, left-wing, ferrous-metal worker, for instance, during an average crisis works out as: *schnortz*, 2 per cent; food, 7 per cent; cigarettes, 4 per cent; *schnortz*, 3 per cent; bus-fares, 2 per cent; Rumpl Day contribution, 10 per cent; *schnortz* all round, 16 per cent; bonfires, 7 per cent; breakages, 19 per cent; fines, etc., 30 per cent.

Compare this with the budget of a non-party, non-ferrous, black-coated worker with one wife and one child: food, clothes, rent, 5 per cent; life insurance, 5 per cent; Rumpl Day contribution, 10 per cent; window-glass, 10 per cent; accident insurance, 20 per cent; fire insurance, 20 per cent; depreciation, 30 per cent.

These figures do not tell by any means the whole story. To understand why Dr. Rumpl is to-day no nearer the waterworks than during the corresponding crisis of last year they should be read in the light of the most recent export figures:

Rolled steel	50,000 t.
Export drive consultants (@ £3,000 p.a.)	37
Avalanches	15
Air-line bookings (at new reduced rates) ..	—
Gen. Zippo (ret. hurt) ..	52
Postage	5*d.*
Govt. majority	98.4

Even this is slightly misleading, as the table fails to distinguish between home-produced and re-exported avalanches; but it goes as far towards explaining Marginalia's confidence about this season's crises as anything you will get from official sources, or unofficial ones, either.

GIANTS' CAUSERIE

"The train now arriving at Platform Three . . ."
(That's ours! We listen expectantly)
"Will Stop at . . ." But we hear no more
For the train now standing at Platform Four
Whispers *"Sh-h-h!"*

"Here's a laugh, dear—'Provided his home is well run the average man is unaware if his wife is in or not'"

AT THE PLAY

Background (WESTMINSTER)—*Touch and Go* (PRINCE OF WALES)

MR. WARREN CHETHAM-STRODE is a dramatist who can turn social problems to dramatic account while weighing them up with the insight and balance of a *Times* leader. He has the happy, and no doubt profitable, knack of sending us away arguing; and about his new play, *Background*, we are likely to argue no less than we did about "The Guinea-Pig." This time his subject is divorce, and divorce from the angle of the children. The case he takes is a good deal simplified, and resolved with a *coup* which seems unnecessarily theatrical; but he makes his points forcefully: that it is the children who suffer most and that it is the duty of drifting parents to try more resolutely.

[*Touch and Go*

Three of a Kind

MR. DAVID LOBER; MR. DESMOND WALTER ELLIS
MISS HELEN GALLAGHER

One certainly feels that the *Lomaxes* are separating rather easily after a long and happy marriage. Neither is really difficult. He is an overworked, slightly pompous barrister, she an inefficient housewife conscious that romance is ebbing. Fielding slip, as it were, is a ham-handed admirer eager to remove her to peace and plenty. Both the *Lomaxes* are devoted to their young, and although their somewhat cold-blooded decision to part is, I suppose, just credible I found it harder to believe that two intelligent people would be so surprised that their children minded. That two minded, to be exact. One of the girls, a little horror, sees only ponies in the idea of her mother's re-marriage; but the other is miserable, and the boy utterly crushed. Played very sensitively by JOHN CHARLESWORTH, he runs away on his return to school, comes back and pots the admirer with his ·22, and thus brings his parents to their senses. This shooting incident is a crude stroke in such a quiet play. If *Adrian* had just been found again, starving and wretched, I am sure the effect would have been greater. Also debatable are the mechanics of his disappearance. For a small boy to be lost for three days suggests a highly improbable carelessness on the part either of his parents or of his headmaster. But there, it does the trick.

The discussion of marriage is not very subtle, but then the *Lomaxes* are a straightforward couple. In a period of rocketing divorce Mr. CHETHAM-STRODE is out to underline one vital fact: that children take the hardest knock, and to this end his simplification is justified. He doesn't preach, but he convinces. *Adrian's* silent torture is enough to shake even a Hollywood chronic.

Mr. NORMAN MARSHALL's production puts us into any family's schoolroom. Miss VALERIE WHITE and Mr. ANDRE MORELL are acceptably the *Lomaxes*, Mr. COLIN DOUGLAS tweedily represents dumb chums in the offing, and Miss LILLY KANN gives a lovely performance, offering delicate implications of tragedy as a German nannie.

Touch and Go, the first American revue to visit us for a long time, is a welcome tonic. Talent abounds (both American and British), but the stars muck in with the rest to form a resiliently gay team. Original and charming dancing, several sketches with a bite, and pleasing individual oddities. An occasional sag, but little saccharin. Brisk music. Clockwork production by Mr. ROBERT E. GRIFFITH. Go.

Recommended

The Open-Air Theatre has begun, bravely if pessimistically, with *The Winter's Tale*. For the urbane adult *The Beaux' Stratagem* (Lyric), for the young of all ages *Treasure Hunt* (Apollo).

ERIC KEOWN

[*Background*

No Surrender

John Lomax—MR. ANDRE MORELL; *Barbara Lomax*—MISS VALERIE WHITE; *Adrian Lomax*—JOHN CHARLESWORTH

BETWEEN THE INNINGS

DURING the interval our league ground is more populated than when the game is in progress. For one thing we have no motor-roller, and the groundsman is an amiable man who never declines assistance. Accordingly, when he and the captain of the team about to bat are out discussing the pitch, hungry helpers are dotted here and there like seagulls. Indeed, some of them are not backward at entering the discussion, as may be deduced from the ring by the way they fling their arms about and occasionally point an outstretched foot.

If the heavy roller has to be brought out the doyen of the helpers can be recognized by the way he snuggles between the shafts. The others pull or push or at least get a hand on somewhere, except for the one who operates at the white-wash bucket, keeping the sediment from dropping to the bottom. Now and then he stops stirring and picks up the marking-board, which he examines keenly, sometimes putting it to his eye and glancing expertly along the edge.

Meanwhile a sort of mule-train takes a short cut across the ground. It is composed of helpers carrying supplies to the refreshment bar and returning with the empties. By putting their right arms behind their heads they grip the edges of boxes containing pies, cakes and potato crisps carried on the left shoulder. If the interval is late the line is thin and slow, but if it is early the line resembles a porterage race at a sports meeting.

Mugs of tea cost one-and-threepence on our ground, experience having taught the officials to charge a shilling on the mug. This sometimes leads to frenzied behaviour. A man will be seen hastening round with jutting eyeballs, the reason

being that he has suddenly remembered having casually deposited his mug in the nearest place. If he is lucky he finds it, but more often someone else has got back the shilling, and then there is a rumpus. The officials explain that it is not their fault, but the victim is never satisfied. Recently one said that if they would let him examine the stock he could identify the mug. The officials pointed out that, even if he did, they could not return the money, and remained obdurate although the man was announcing that their meat pies were stranded whale.

As we have a membership of fifteen hundred and folk up here like getting their money's-worth the ground is mostly packed. A good percentage of the attendance is composed of family parties, and during the interval parents ease constraint by sending their children on to the grass. The club has no objection so long as they do not overrun the pitch. And it is a joy to altruistic elders as they sit and watch the children's frolics, with the air full of soft balls, paper arrows and the quivering iridescence emitted from magic bubble pipes.

But at last the children are called in at the sound of a bell. The heavy roller begins the long voyage home. For a little while the field is unoccupied, and the greenness and beauty of it are enhanced by the surround of mill chimneys, dye-works, weaving sheds and smut-darkened houses. The shadows begin to lengthen as the umpires come out. The players follow, and soon the match is aboil.

PERIOD FLAVOUR

IT was a wonderful overcoat they used to wear in the 'nineties, a coat which, by some mysterious means, enabled the tailors of the West End to express the spirit of that brief, gay and brilliant epoch. It made the wearer appear tall (even if he were in fact short) and elegant with a peculiar elegance by virtue of its tautly shaped waist, its long sweeping skirt. It would carry him off irresistibly towards the Empire Promenade and make it impossible for him not to be witty, debonair, perhaps a little dissipated. In contrast with the grave and mercantile Victorian frockcoat it was a frivolous, one might almost say an epigrammatic, garment. Had the cutters of Savile Row read Baudelaire on the nature of dandyism? Whether or no, they came near to the spirit in which he wrote. Did they study the Japanese prints which were then so revered by the æsthetes? Possibly not, yet they had somehow acquired a sense of line, a feeling for the silhouette which was quite in the Japanese style—was also the essence of 'ninetyish art. Work of art in itself, the coat was inspiring to artists. How exactly right it was for the pen-line or the dense and dazzling blacks of Phil May. With what willowy grace it enabled Sargent to invest his portrait of Graham Robertson. How striking a picture it helps to make of Will Rothenstein's "L'Homme qui Sort"—one of the early works in the artist's memorial exhibition now on view at the Tate Gallery.

Painted in 1892, it shows that typical figure of the period, Conder, the dreamy designer of fans, with top hat at the correctly jaunty angle, with face of the correctly distinguished pallor and, of course, the coat flowing close to the patent leather shoes, as he rests one hand lightly on the door knob, in every respect the man "going out" in the 'ninetyish sense of stepping (and stopping) out for the evening. The period style of which fashion is but one product creates its own sympathy between artist and subject.

If Sir William Rothenstein does not entirely belong to the 'nineties, when he was young he was, as the friend of Whistler, of Beardsley, of Wilde, of "Max," indispensable to the gay decade. Through what uproarious symposia did he not sit at the Café Royal, in quiet perseverance, admiring the sallies of wit and quietly lamenting the signs of excess, while Oscar laughingly chided him for "looking so sensible." With what pleasure one recognizes in another picture (1894), above a positive constellation of Period coats, the characterful heads of the youthful Beerbohm, of Walter Sickert, apt pupil of a witty master, of D. S. MacColl, "the Ruskin of the New English Art Club," of Wilson Steer, that taciturn painter who yet, wearing the mantle of the time, was capable now and then of its *mots*. "Rothenstein," he remarked, in one of these moments of esprit, "paints much like the rest of us—but from higher motives, of course."

These were the pictures of a young man in his twenties and very good they are. How good, too, is the "Coster Girls" (of 1894) with that opposite charm of the low, in necessary contrast with the high, life of the time but steeped also in its glamour touched with the magic of the gas lamps and the foggy Whistlerian twilight. To single them out is not to treat lightly the rest of Sir William's paintings and drawings. One is grateful for the hundreds of works which record the appearance of twentieth-century philosophers and men of learning, poets and novelists, statesmen and members of the Forces in both our World Wars. He did, however, leave the glamorous age behind as one might leave a pleasant party, shivering slightly in the serious and cold dawn of a new age.

WILLIAM GAUNT

EVE IN THE ORCHARD

FARE you well; yet do not leave me:
who can tell? you may retrieve me:
yet do not believe me now;
change of heart, like change of season,
knows no art nor works by reason
and no treason does
to any vow.

Apple blossom, massed in muster,
loads the lissome bough with lustre
white as stars in cluster here:
yet in time of elder weather
all this prime must die together
in the nether failing
of the year.

Love's not all; then make no chiding:
flowers must fall without abiding:
so let our dividing be.
Love's a flower that must be palling
every hour, beyond recalling.
Though it's falling, still
there stands the tree:

other days may bring us pleasure,
other Mays a richer measure
or some newer treasure find:
fare you well, yet go not grieving;
spring's sweet spell in summer's leaving,
yet it's weaving, now,
my next year's mind.

ALUN LLEWELLYN

A WIND ON THE HEATH

The result of a surfeit of Nature literature

THROWING myself down in the meagre shelter of a stunted holly bush I lit my pipe and laughed with sudden exhilaration as the icy wind dashed a handful of hailstones as large as peas squarely across my face. My old dog Trot, nosing about among the ripening shoots of carpenter's curse, put up a couple of bald-headed pintails which shot off with an angry "harkle-parkle!"

A few blows of my old cherrywood stick cleared the crust of frozen hail from a clump of creeping pigbane as I made myself as comfortable as possible in my resting place. The tough stems of the pigbane, I noticed, had suffered from the attentions of the augerfly, being riddled with the usual tiny perforations. Could eggs have already been laid, I wondered? I was fumbling with numbed fingers for my magnifying glass when there was a crash and a spurt of twigs from a nearby larch, and I looked up in time to see a Hodgson's full-throated pumblecoot knocked twenty feet by the stoop of a peregrine falcon. A moment later I heard a smothered "Dang it!" and the village poacher, Seth Sowpickle, dropped noiselessly from the tree and came towards me with his lithe, slinking stride.

"What on earth were you doing up there, Seth?" I laughed.

"Waitin' for t'owd whickerchuff (Hodgson's full-throated pumblecoot). Tha sees, Ah knows her perchin' branch. About midnight Ah takes up me position an' when her comes Ah makes a—a——"

"A species of leap?"

"Aye, aye, a species o' leap!" he assented eagerly. "But t'owd diddycup (the old peregrine falcon) were first!"

"Nevertheless," I said, "I dare say your night wasn't wasted?"

For answer he lifted his coat, and I saw slung round his waist a fine dog otter. From one of the enormous pockets of his old-fashioned waistcoat the tail of a sizeable trout protruded and a noble hare was thrust down the front of his trousers.

"Ah conna grumble," he said.

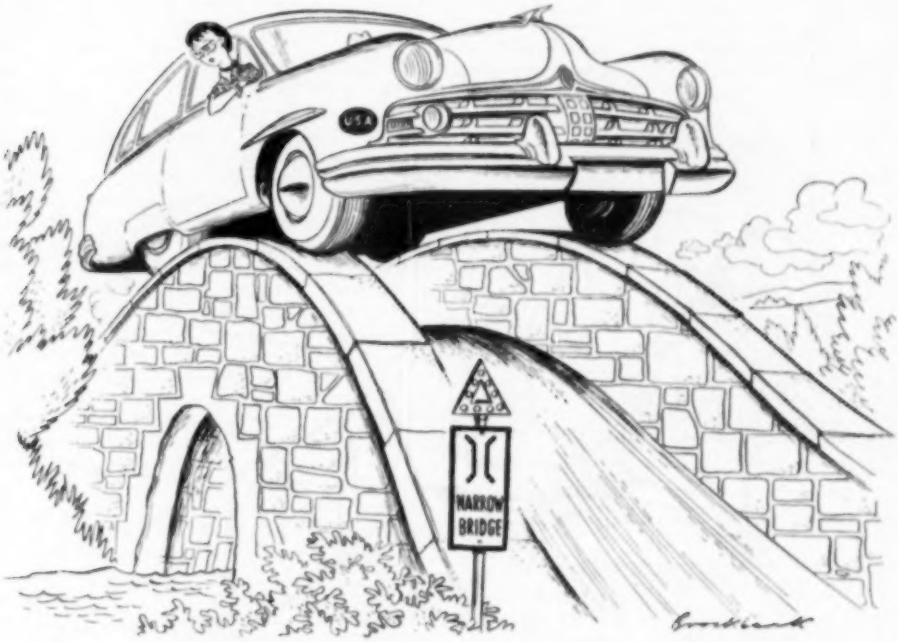
Trot had come up to smell the game and Seth flicked his fingers encouragingly, but drew back with an exclamation as the old dog buried his fangs in the lean, brown hand.

"Hullo!" I exclaimed with a chuckle of astonishment. "That's not like you, Trot!"

Seth plucked a few leaves of bitter heartwort and bound them deftly round the wound.

"Hand me they binoculars, lad," he said. "There's summat queer afoot." He swept the glasses to and fro. "Dogs, tha sees," he went on, "have a language of their own. Hast ever heard"—he put the glasses down—"o' the salmon's overland journeys?"

"Well," I said, "I believe that



when two rivers run fairly near together a hen salmon will sometimes make her way overland from one to the other, often followed by her mate. I seem to remember a rather violent argument in the correspondence columns of a fishing journal as to the propriety of casting a fly to a fish in such circumstances."

"Aye, well, what makes the hen salmon do it we conna tell. Maybe some impulse o'—o'——"

"Coquetry?" I said.

"Aye, that's it, coquetry. Well, last autumn Ah decided to see for myself, an' Ah gave up one day to combing the countryside for salmon. Ah wasted no time on th' arterial road—they won't face heavy traffic—but Ah searched the woods an' fields, an' Ah soon saw a silvery glitter in a clump o' dead man's humblebane. Well, as Ah were stoopin' to look closer, my owd dog flew at my throat like a zimbycoop (maniac), an' almost t'same second Ah were butted a matter o' ten feet by a hornybeast (stag). T'dog were tryin' to warn me, like."

I could not resist casting an uneasy glance over my shoulder, but before I could ask Seth if he thought that Trot's conduct portended the approach of hostile beasts there was a rustling in some wild spearmint bushes, and a handsome young gipsy stepped forth. With feline grace he moved towards us, his head held like a conqueror. In an instant Trot had him by the ankle.

"That's interesting, Seth!" I exclaimed. "Trot certainly seems bent on communicating something of importance!"

Seth pacified the gipsy with a greater bandy-legged smew which he produced with something of a conjurer's flourish—from his hip pocket, I think—and the lad limped sinuously away. Seth inclined to the opinion that Trot's first attack had indeed been a warning, but that the second was rather in the nature of an "as you were" or "all clear," the dog having meanwhile become convinced that he had been in error.

It was late that night before I reached my little cottage, and I was almost as glad to get there as I am to finish this article, which is saying a good deal. It has been a great relief, nevertheless.

T. S. Watt

THE TRAM REMEMBERS AN OLD LIMERICK

Road Reconstruction — All Traffic Turn Left (Except Trams)
City of Westminster road sign

THE bright steel rails go on for ever;
Onward I clank, and must clank alone.
For me no turning: I shall never
Travel your strange and dim Unknown.

Year after year we have sped together—
I (you recall) a creature that moves
Tied to this base electric tether,
Held in these damned predestinate grooves.

Well, here's your chance—at yonder corner
Left lies your going adventurous.
Clang! Clang! I would I had been born a
Green Line coach or a motor-bus.

G. H. Vallins

BOOKING OFFICE

The Light Novel

FOUR new "light" novels—using the term "light" in the same sense as it was used in the "Oxford Book of Light Verse"—are all concerned with vitally important problems, but as they are aimed at a wide range of readers they cannot use the devices by which the "serious" novel tries to render the depth of contemporary experience in contemporary terms. All the writers could obviously have handled something more ambitious in the way of fiction, something with more "ambiguity," but it would be as much of a mistake to suppose that they were deliberately writing down to a commercially rewarding public as to suppose that they were ignorant of the full resources of the modern novel. The term "middlebrow" has been used almost entirely in a pejorative sense; but provided he is not just trying to be a highbrow and failing, provided he knows what he wants to do and is doing it honestly and well, the modern middlebrow can produce just as good work as the older middlebrow, like Goldsmith or Crabbe or the English novelists before George Eliot.

Mr. Eric Linklater's short novel *Mr. Byculla* is very successful within its self-imposed limits. This modern horror story or, in its author's phrase, "superior thriller," is both exciting and stimulating, often opposed qualities. Mr. Linklater's Bridie-esque fertility of comment and impatience with construction are disciplined for once, and he has produced one of his happiest hits. This tale of Thuggee in London completely vitalizes a serious theme, and manages successfully to mix powder and jam.

A Morning at the Office is much more readable and effective than might be suggested by the theory of fiction which Mr. Edgar Mittelhölzer introduces into his book. His setting—an office in Trinidad—and his theme—the variations of colour snobbery in a racially mixed area—give him new and interesting material, and he does not make the mistake of thinking that new material makes it unnecessary to master the traditional methods of keeping the reader's interest alive. His interwoven stories, studies of character and descriptions of environment make a satisfying whole. By writing a "light" novel on a subject which obviously concerns him deeply he certainly sacrifices resonance but gains in width of appeal.

Mr. Stephen Lister's *Marise* has a very characteristic tone of voice. I have not read his earlier books, but I gather that this is one of a series of "fictionalized" reminiscences, diversified with odd information and comment. It is about life in a Mediterranean fishing village, where there are long arguments between the author and the curé, Father Delorme, disputes over the rearing of the author's foster-child, some rather heavy satire at the English genteel expatriate and a good deal of talk about cooking. The blurb unfairly represents the author as a cynic whose gall has turned to honey: it makes the book sound so unappetizing that I hesitated to read it at all. However, though Mr. Lister suffers a little from the fact that his heresies have become orthodoxies, so that his coat-trailing is likely to annoy only the very old as being irreverent and the very young as being old-fashioned, he does know how to concoct a readable book, even if his materials are not always of very high quality.

Mr. Edward Hyams's *The Astrologer* is avowedly a satirical novel, and is energetically satirical in all directions. It is about a mathematician who discovers a method of scientifically forecasting the future, which is exploited by commercial and political interests. The plot is a little old, but it provides plenty of opportunity for shooting; unfortunately, Mr. Hyams's targets have been already under fire for a good many years. Satire should attack either new targets, or old ones from a new angle. That is perhaps why the most successful satirists have come from splinter parties—John Scanlon, for example. Mr. Hyams has plenty of comic invention and narrative verve, so that his novel is always enjoyable—probably much too enjoyable to achieve its purpose. However, it may usefully annoy somebody, and it will certainly please anybody who is prepared to overlook some dead wood for the sake of many gaily blossomed trees.

R. G. G. PRICE

Ripeness is All

A mellow book by an elder writer reminds one that education, once directed perhaps too exclusively towards maturity, evinces singularly little foresight of that kind nowadays. The green apple is all. Very soon there will be no ripe apples. For which of our young acquaintances gives any promise of enjoying his

"Somebody DID *ring, I tell you."*

"declining West" with the gusto of Mr. S. L. Bensusan, who withdraws into meditation as into a well-provisioned stronghold! *Quiet Evening*, the observations and reflections of a recent series of diaries, shows what abundance may be enjoyed in the restricted present by a veteran with a well-spent past. His brain, it is true, may have put up a notice "House Full"; but the performance, with its rich background of Suffolk-Essex scenery and its memorable cast of East Anglian worthies and East Anglian fauna, is still going on. The upshot is a kindly and imaginative book which should delight all lovers of the English countryside; and may there be another book soon! H. P. E.

Half Sick of Shadows

Miss Josephine Lawrence begins her novel, *The Pleasant Morning Light*, by giving us the half-amusing and half-touching picture of a girl staring into a mirror and larding her young skin with potions that are intended to entice, bind fast, and turn some man into a husband. While she tortures her hair she reads a book, "Your Selected Mate," by a man who "has it all doped out how a girl can get married." The story of the solemn desperate battle of Hannah and her cousins to find the cure for "spinster neurosis," since "not having a husband is a neurotic symptom," is a deft mixture of comedy, tragedy and irony. Though it is told rather too lengthily and thoroughly it may, for all most of us know, be a good commentary on life as lived by the female young of the U.S.A. B. E. B.

"Hello! Pest Control Officer, County Agricultural Committee?"

Queen Meets Boy

One of Queen Victoria's most human adventures concerned an urchin who wriggled into Windsor Castle and bobbed up, to the horror of both the Queen and himself, in the royal dining-room. This is fact, and from it an American, Mr. Theodore Bonnet, has built a fantasy—*The Mudlark*—much more original than the usual historical novel. To an apparently microscopic knowledge—and understanding—of England in the 'seventies he brings a pleasing blend of affection and satire which makes very lively reading. Disraeli, a favourite with Mr. Bonnet, as Gladstone clearly is not, was at the royal table when the unthinkable event occurred, and later allayed its graver repercussions in a guileful speech in the House (an excellent pastiche). John Brown, in his cups, takes an uncertain hand. The Guards are made to blush. Scotland Yard rocks. And even Cupid is obliged to defer to this other little boy. Only one slip suspected in a meticulous reconstruction: had the Commons ever a Conservative gallery? E.O.D.K.

Coastwise

The pageant of shipping in British coastal waters has lost much of its variety and beauty with the departure of sail; but that is not to say that either its interest or what is sometimes termed its romance has vanished. Mr. David Cobb, who has written and illustrated with a wealth of spirited sketches a survey of shipping to be seen around the coasts of Britain under the title *Three Mile Limit*, recognizes this fact even while deploring the passing of so many of the types of craft he illustrates. Deal lugger, Brixham trawler, Bristol pilot cutter—these and many others, more's the pity—are no longer with us. But the endless struggle for mastery between men and the sea still goes on, as Mr. Cobb aptly demonstrates in his rendering of such subjects as "H.M.S. Vanguard at Sea" and "Pilot making a jump for his ship." He has learned to know the sea and ships both in peace and in war, and he writes of both as well as he draws them. C. F. S.

Books Reviewed Above

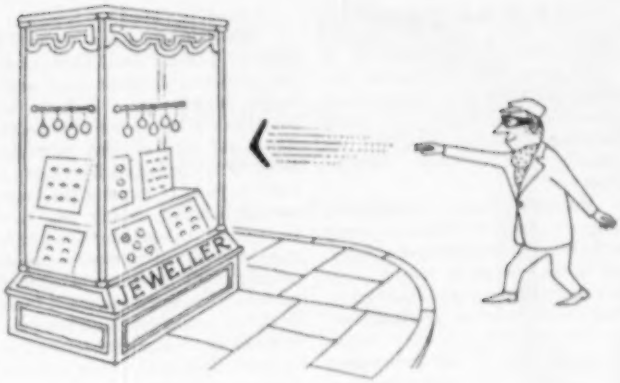
Mr. Byculla. Eric Linklater. (Rupert Hart-Davis, 8/6)
A Morning at the Office. Edgar Mittelhölzer. (Hogarth Press, 8/6)
Marise. Stephen Lister. (Peter Davies, 8/6)
The Astrologer. Edward Hyams. (Longmans, 9/6)
Quiet Evening. S. L. Bensusan. (Blandford Press, 10/6)
The Pleasant Morning Light. Josephine Lawrence. (Heinemann, 10/6)
The Mudlark. Theodore Bonnet. (W. H. Allen, 9/6)
Three Mile Limit. David Cobb. (Phœnix House, 12/6)

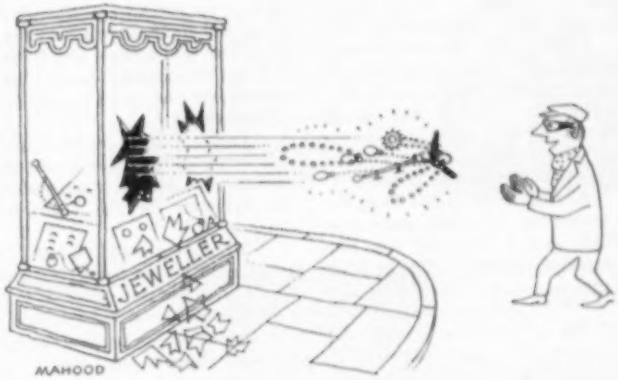
Other Recommended Books

The Isles of Unwisdom. Robert Graves. (Cassell, 10/6) Packed, detailed historical novel about a Spanish colonizing expedition to the Solomons in 1595, written as the narrative of one who took part. Stilted dialogue, but very readable.

Tell Me the Next One. John Godley. (Gollancz, 6/-) For Dunne fans: a young man's straightforward, heavily corroborated account of how he has, often, dreamed—in ample time for placing bets—the correct result of a horse-race. No explanation; take it or leave it. Dunne fans will take it without the slightest difficulty.

THE MAN AND THE LANDLORD





THE man explained what he had come about. "My lease expires in September. Are you going to put the rent up?" He added, unable to resist the temptation, "—again."

The landlord seemed to be taken unawares. "I haven't given it a thought yet," he lied.

"Well, will you think about it now?"

The landlord played for time. "How long have you been in the flat?"

"Ten years."

"A long time." The landlord pondered. "What's your rent?"

"Two-fifty. Plus anything by which the rates exceed what they were when it was fixed at two-fifty. Remember?"

The landlord looked guilty. "Yes, I do."

"That makes it, at present, two-eighty-five." Their eyes showed their different reactions to the knowledge that the rates were going up all the time.

The landlord offered excuses for the burdens he had laid on the man's neck. "It isn't *cheap* to run that place, you know! What do you think it costs to do the outside up?"

The man looked stubborn, and dug in his toes against being manœuvred into a position where he would be made to feel sorry for the landlord. "Two hundred pounds," he muttered, wilfully.

"*Two hundred pounds!*" The landlord laughed him to scorn. "A THOUSAND!"

The man pointed out the fallacy. "But it hasn't been done up for *years*!"

The landlord ignored the intervention and went on building up his case. "Porters' wages have gone up a third!"

The man said "We used to have three porters. Now we've got two." There was silence while the landlord calculated that on this he was actually saving money. He hurried to a different proposition. "Then there's fuel!"

The man reminded him of the facts. "You just can't *spend* what you used to on fuel! The allocation's only a proportion of what was burnt before the war." He reverted to the reason for his visit. "Well, what *about* the rent going up?"

The landlord searched for ulterior motives. "Why do you want to know?" he asked.

"Isn't it natural?"

"No, of course it isn't natural. The natural thing would be to wait till September and hope I'd forgotten all about it. Or rather till June. We have to give you a quarter's notice. You're not thinking of selling the lease, I suppose?"

The man ridiculed the suggestion. "Who'd buy it?"

"You know perfectly well there's people who'd buy it. We can't *stand* our leases being sold over our heads! That other people should make money out of our property——!" The language at the landlord's command afforded no port of escape from the storm evoked.

"Did I say I was going to sell the lease?" the man asked.

"No."

"Well! Now about the rent?"

The landlord dismissed the matter. "Oh, *I* don't know. If it *did* go up it wouldn't be much."

"Much?"

"Ten bob a week. Perhaps a pound."

The man seemed horrified. "That's over fifty pounds a year! I just can't afford to *stay* there!"

* * * * *

"What's more," he added, "I can't afford to *move*!"

THE CHAIRMAN

"IT looks," said Edith, "as if Sympson has thrown up the sponge and decided to let you have the chairmanship. I've been watching all afternoon and he certainly hasn't called on the Froskins."

Munton Parva Community League had lost its chairman owing to the resignation of Brigadier Hogg, and in the evening we were to have an extraordinary general meeting to elect a new chairman. At the annual meeting in February the Hogg-Sympson faction had triumphed and I had been beaten by two votes. This time the battle would be between Sympson and myself, and the Froskins' votes would almost certainly determine the issue.

The Froskins are newcomers to Munton Parva, and moved into the house opposite ours a month ago. Within two days I had called, offered the loan of my lawnmower and enrolled all five of them as members of the Community League.

As soon as Brigadier Hogg announced his impending resignation Edith and I discussed the best method of ensuring that the Froskins would cast their votes for me.

"We're getting more eggs than we can eat just now," Edith said thoughtfully, "and I don't think the Froskins' hens have got to the laying stage yet . . ."

I shook my head.

"We mustn't stoop to actual bribery," I said. "And I think a less direct approach will be quite sufficient. If you were to call on the Froskins and have a cup of tea with them and sort of hint that the Hogg-Sympson faction have made a horrible mess of running the Community League during the past three years, it should do the trick. It wouldn't look well to mention specifically that it is my new blood that is needed, but as Sympson and I will be the only candidates and Sympson is hopelessly committed to the discredited Hogg policy they will just *have* to vote for me. . . ."

So Edith called on the Froskins and did a bit of judicious propaganding, and the Froskins called back in a body and drank about a week's tea ration and said what a pity it was that the Community League had gone to rack and ruin through lack of leadership.

"That is exactly my husband's view," said Edith. "And his friends have persuaded him to stand against Mr. Sympson for the chairmanship. . . ."

"Not that I *want* the job," I added with a light laugh, "in fact I have so many commitments that I shall have quite a problem fitting it in, but my friends are kind enough to insist, so what can I do?"

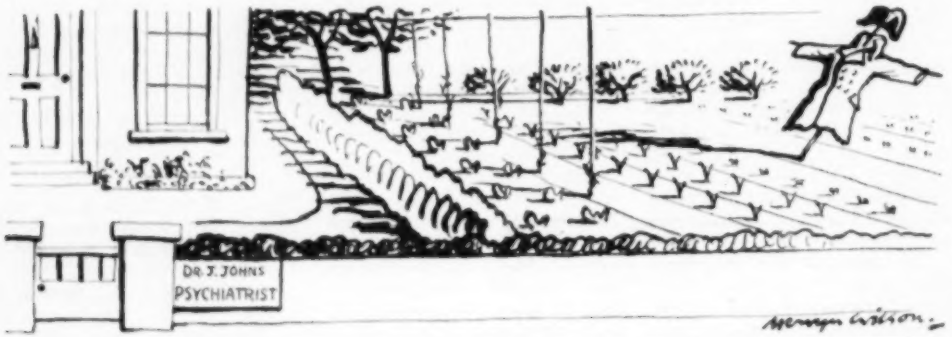
We quite expected Sympson to make a last-minute effort to capture the Froskins' votes, but he had not called on them when we set out for the meeting, and when we arrived at the hall he told us why.

"The Froskins won't be coming to-night," he said. "I met George Froskin in the village this morning and it seems they have had a stroke of luck. Somebody has sent them five free tickets for that new show in town at the Frivolity. . . ."

Knowing that the manager of the Frivolity is an old Army pal of Sympson's I had no difficulty in putting two and two together, and regretted my over-scrupulousness about the eggs.

It looked as though Sympson would get in by one vote, as the Brigadier was absent, but elections rarely turn out the way one expects, and this was no exception. I was delighted to see the five Froskins arrive just after the meeting started, but not so delighted when George Froskins got up and said that it was pretty hard they should have to choose between a candidate identified so closely with the mistakes of the past and another candidate who admitted he hadn't time to do the job properly. Before he sat down I had a nasty feeling what was going to happen, and I was right. George Froskins, proposed by Harold Froskins and seconded by William Froskins was elected chairman by an overwhelming majority.

D. H. BARBER



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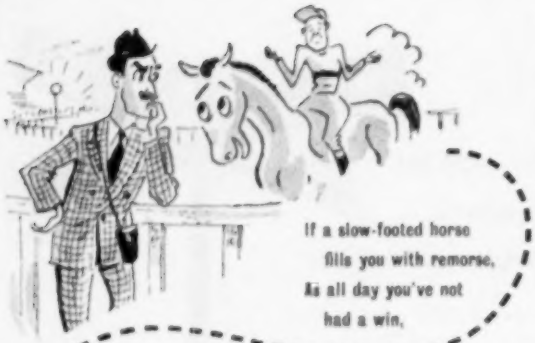

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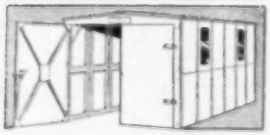

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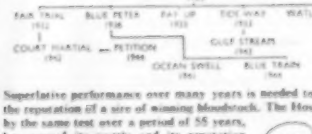

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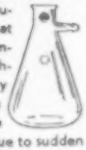

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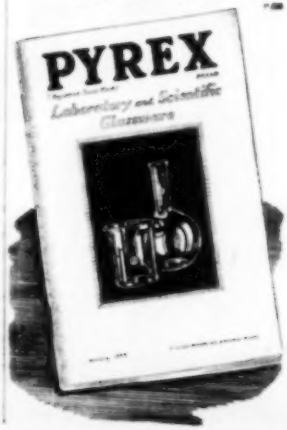

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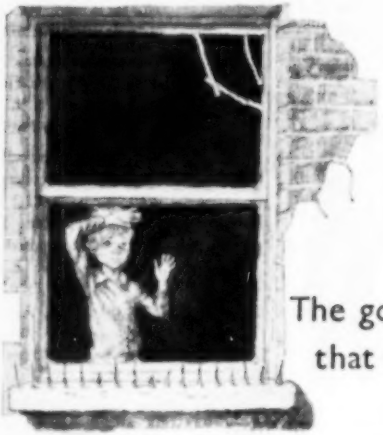

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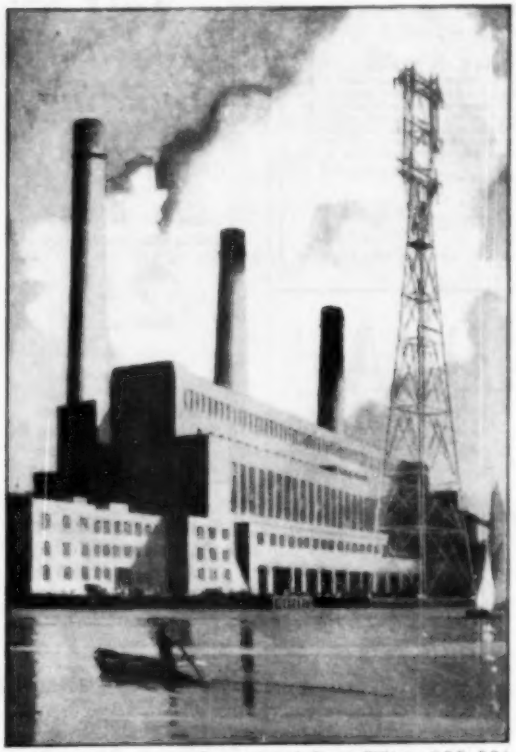

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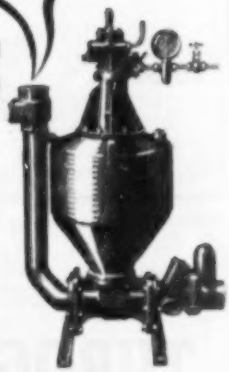

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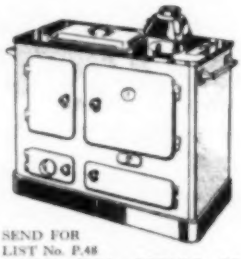

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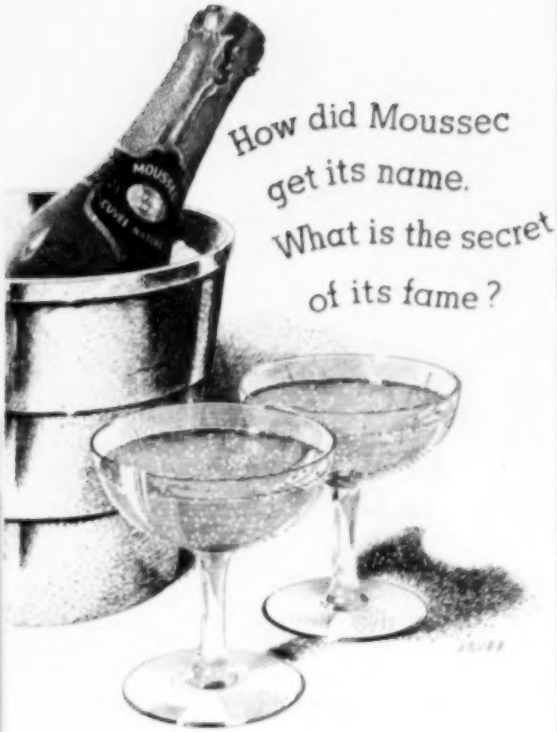

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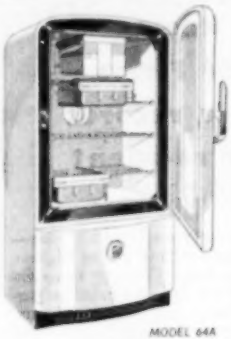

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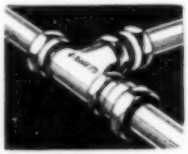

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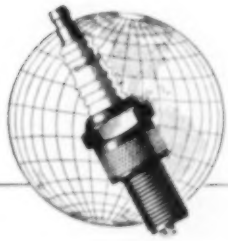

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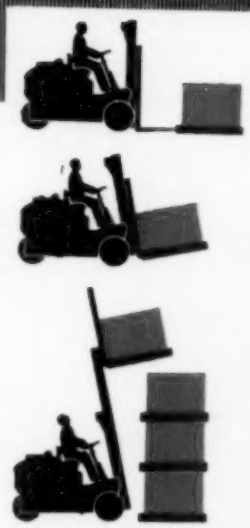

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